John V. O'Neill
4911 Aurora Drive
Kensington, Maryland 20895
August 22, 1990

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~~September 6, 1990~~

House Name~
Address~
City~, State~ Zip Code~

Dear House Name~ Members,

My name is John O'Neill. I was in the halfway house in Silver Spring, Md. that we turned into the first Oxford House in 1975. I was the first president of that house, the first president of the second Oxford House, and the first chairman of the board of Oxford House, Inc. Since leaving Oxford House I have remained as active as any alumnus. The recent expansion of Oxford House was my idea.

I mention this history so you will realize that I understand Oxford House and what it stands for as well as anybody.

I write because I'm deeply disturbed and angry that Paul Molloy has submitted a $920,000 proposal to the federal government that would have Oxford House participate in the opening of houses for methadone users and houses for ex-prisoners. I believe, and every Oxford House resident and alumnus I have spoken with agrees, this to be a serious violation of the Oxford House principles. Yet Molloy hasn't withdrawn the proposal. I suggest that you read this letter at one of your regular house meetings and post it in a prominent place.

I object to the proposal on for four major reasons:

(1) It was written and submitted in secrecy without the Oxford House Board of Directors ever seeing a copy. There was no group conscience or the proposal wouldn't have been submitted in the first place.

(2) The organization chart of people who would open these methadone and ex-prisoner houses looks like the lineup for a consulting firm. At the top is Paul Molloy, who calls himself chief executive officer; followed by Charles van der Burgh, chief financial officer; John Touhey, chief operating officer; and John Jordan, director of special projects.

These people may be good at writing proposals for government money, but none except Molloy has ever lived in an Oxford House.

On the next line is Greg Heafner, who is no longer with Oxford House. The next line has Mollie Brown, outreach coordinator; Richard Dembo and Eric Wish, ex-offender project; and Joseph Brady, methadone project. Again, none has ever lived in an Oxford House.

This is the organizational chart of a consulting firm designed to gather government contracts, rather than an Oxford House project. These people aren't in recovery and don't understand recovery principles.

(3) The third thing that really bothers me is the salaries involved.

For instance, the government would pay Oxford House $275,000 to open three methadone houses. Molloy would work 750 hours at $45.67/hr. for a total of $34,254.81. Van der Burgh would work 160 hours at $40.87 for $6,538.46. John Jordan would work 450 hours at $26.44/hr. for $11,899. The Oxford House people who would actually deal with the methadone addicts would work 870 hours for either $11.25/hr and $9,787,50, or 870 hours for $10/hr. for $8,700. In other parts of the proposal, Oxford House outreach people would receive as little as $6.25 per hour while Molloy gets $45.67 and van der Burgh gets $40.87.

Salary differentials like these are wrong.

(4) All the above reasons for opposing the proposal are minor compared to the last. The main reason I oppose it is that Oxford House has not business being affiliated in any way with methadone houses.

Oxford House is based on 12-Step principles, a Higher Power, people helping one another, self-support. This proposal is based on doing anything for money.

To be involved with opening methadone houses, whether they are called Oxford Houses or not, is a direct violation of the most important Oxford House principle. Oxford Houses are for people who don't use alcohol or drugs. Methadone houses are for people who use drugs every day. Methadone is a highly addictive opiate. Methadone houses would probably be harmful since they would enable people to continue using drugs. To send Oxford House people, relatively new in recovery, to start methadone houses could well endanger their sobriety.

There is but one reason to get involved with methadone houses, and that's money. I say Oxford House will never need money that badly.

There are other reasons to oppose the proposal that can be stated briefly. Houses for methadone users and ex-prisoners won't work. They will detract from the Oxford House mission. They will be an embarrassment.

It was actions like the secret submission of the $920,000 proposal that caused me to leave the Oxford House expansion effort. It was Molloy's contact on Capitol Hill that led to passage of the recovery house amendment in the Anti Drug Abuse Act of 1988. Right after passage the mood in Oxford House changed.

Molloy's first act was to put together on paper a consulting firm he called J. Paul Molloy Associates and ask the federal government for contracts spreading Oxford Houses. I told him this was Oxford House, not a private consulting firm.

Later he appointed himself chief executive officer. I had never heard of a recovery organization with a chief executive officer. Recovery organizations have executive directors. And I have never heard of a IRS tax-exempt corporation anywhere in which anybody appointed himself head of the corporation. It simply hasn't happened before. To the day Molloy has never been elected a corporate officer.

Next he put together an unsolicited proposal for the federal

government in which he assigned himself a salary of $120,000, plus fringe benefits that would raise it to $168,000. I told him salary figures like that were ridiculous, and were more than the Secretary of Health and Human Services was making and all the senators and representatives who voted for the Anti Drug Abuse Act. He insisted that he was worth it, found a way to disguise it by lumping salaries together in the proposal, and submitted it. The government funded only a small portion of the proposal.

I think you can see from the methadone proposal and a couple of the other incidents I've mentioned that Oxford House badly needs a group conscience.

The board or directors at the Aug. 21 Oxford House town meeting asked the houses to comment individually and as Oxford House chapters on the things that affect the corporation, and specifically on Molloy's proposal that would have Oxford House associated with methadone houses and houses for ex-prisoners.

If you or your house wants the proposal withdrawn, I encourage you to write to:

Brian Lennon
Chairman of the Board
Oxford House, Inc.
2023 Kalorama Rd. NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

Oxford House for nearly 15 years has had a tradition of alcoholics and drug addicts selflessly helping one another, giving freely of their time and even money to start new houses. I don't believe Oxford House can maintain its integrity if it decides to start opening other kinds of houses for money. House presidents and others at the Oxford House Town Meeting Aug. 21 voted 24 to 1 to ask that the proposal be withdrawn. Molloy was there and heard the group conscience vote and, amazingly, still didn't say he would withdraw the proposal. I ask that your voices join those at the Town Meeting and that you write Brian Lennon in opposition to the proposal.

Sincerely yours,

John V. O'Neill